

ACT II] BEING EARNEST
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Enter Cecily at the back of the garden. She picks up the can and begins to water the flowers,

But I must see her before I go, and make arrangements for another Bunbury. Ah, there she is.

Cecily. Oh, I merely came back to water the roses. I thought

you were with Uncle Jack.

Algernon. He's gone to order the dog-cart for me.

Cecily. Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

Algernon. He's going to send me away.

Cecily. Then have we got to part?

Algernon. I am afraid so. It's a very painful parting.

Cecily. It is always painful to part from people whom one has

known for a very brief space of time. The

absence of old

friends one can endure with

equanimity. But even a

momentary separation from any one to whom

one has just

been introduced is almost unbearable.

Algernon. Thank you,

"Enter Tvlerriman.

Merriman. The dog-cart is at the door, sir.

Cecily. It can wait, Merriman . . . for . . *. five

minutes.

Merriman. Yes, Miss.

[Exit

Merriman.

Algernon. I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I

state

frankly and openly that you seem to me to be in quite

every way

the visible personification of absolute perfection.

Cecily. I think your frankness does you great

credit, Ernest.

If you will allow me, I will copy your remarks into

my diary.

[Goes over to table and begins writing in diary.

Algernon. Do you really keep a diary? I'd give

anything

to look at it. May I?

Cecily. Oh, no! *[Puts her hand over it.]* You see, it

is

a very young girl's record of her own thoughts

and

impressions

and consequently meant for publication. When it

appears

in

volume form I hope you will order a copy. But

pray,

don't stop. I delight in taking down from Ernest,

dictation. I

have

reached "absolute perfection." You can go on, I

am

quite

ready for more.

Algernon. *[Somewhat taken aback.]* Ahem! Ahem I

Cecily. Oh, don't cough, Ernest. When one is

dictating

one

should speak fluently and not cough. Besides, I

don't

know

how to spell a cough. *[Writes as Algernon*

speaks.

Algernon. *[Speaking very rapidly]* Cecily,

ever since I first